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Joint Effect of the First Course in Accounting, Students' Performance and Career Guidance on Choice of Accounting Specialization

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Abstract:
The First Course in Accounting, students' performance and career guidance act as eye openers to choose of Accounting Specialization and career. This is because the synergetic benefits of the three components are greater than the sum of the individual variable. The first Course in Accounting introduces the students to the fundamental concepts of accounting. When a student fails to grasp these concepts at the earliest opportunity, it would be detrimental to the comprehension and application of accounting practice in the business world. Further, Students' performance in the course stands at the centre of the choice of Accounting Specialization. Career guidance specific to the accounting profession gave a student adequate insight into the discipline that heightened the probability of their choosing the career. A conceptual framework was used to explain the joint interactive relationship amongst the study variables. The Theory of Consumer Behaviour was used as the study's anchoring theory to explain the study variables. A researcher designed questionnaire was used to collect data from sampled students. Logistic regression model tested the null hypothesis and rejected it at 5% significance level. The findings revealed a significant joint effect of The First Course in Accounting, Students Performance and Career Guidance on Choice of Accounting Specialization. The synergetic benefits of the joint effect are expected to be the study's greatest Contribution to knowledge in the field of Accounting.

Keywords: First course in accounting, student performance, career guidance, choice of accounting specialization,

1. Background of the Study

The First Course in Accounting should act as a gate way into Accounting Specialization(Rababah, 2016); (Dibabe, Wubie, & Wondmagegn, 2015); (Lim & Seng, 2016);(McDowall & Jackling, 2010). However, the contrary has been the case as only a handful of students choose Accounting Specialization (Musa & Amadi,2019).This situation has posed serious challenges to most economies as more qualified accountants are needed in all organizations for proper recording, analysis and interpretation of financial statements using appropriate accounting skills (Dibabe, Wubie, & Wondmagegn, 2015). The study grouped the issues into four aspects; the nature of The First Course in Accounting, students' performance, career guidance given on accounting profession and the choice of Accounting Specialization.

Research has shown that most students had developed negative perceptions towards The First Course in Accounting (Musa, 2019). They viewed the course content as full of imaginary figures, dull and boring, difficult to pass, not exposing them to practice and that it adhered to procedural rules of double-entry concept of book keeping and accounting principles, thus forcing them to cram and hence rot learning (Muas,2019). This was evidenced by the fact that most students at higher levels of accounting lacked basic skills in accounting which were vital in The First Course in Accounting and accounting career at large (Rababah, 2016).

Most Universities across the world had recorded poor performance by students in The First Course in Accounting. This was evidenced by non-completion and comprehension of the whole process of Accounting cycle and principles which are the backbone of The First Course in Accounting and accounting career (Samso,2010). Other factors reported by prior studies on low performance in The First Course in Accounting included; lack of prior knowledge in accounting (Marinaccio,2017); large class sizes of The First Course in Accounting classes in the Universities (Kofi,2014); lack of experience and or proper qualifications from most Instructors of The First Course in Accounting (Rababah, 2016). As a result, Accounting Specialization has been less attractive to students (Dibabe, 2015;Sang & Tang, 2016).

Consequently, most students who chose Accounting Specializationended up as 'half-baked' graduates (Demagalhaes & Lisa, 2011). This resulted into most organizations employing persons with lower qualifications to undertake accounting work (World Bank & International Monetary Fund, 2017). This phenominon created a mismatch between skills posed by most accounting graduates and employers requirements on entry into the job market (Borges, Santos, & Leal, 2014);(Kavangah & Drennan, 2008).

The situation had been made worse in Kenya as reported by the Kenya Accountant and Secretary National Examination Board(KASNEB, 2019), whereby most employers preferred students who had attained Certified Public Accountant Certificate section three when compared to their counterparts who hold Bachelors of Commerce (Accounting) degree graduates' which is a lower qualification.

In addition, career guidance given to Bachelors of Commerce students on Accounting Specializationwas either inappropriate or lacking evidenced by the unsettled accounting students during the period given to them to make changes (Mudilia, Ayiro, & Kipsoi, 2017);(Lugulu & Kipkoech, 2011). Inadequate career guidance concerning the choice of Accounting Specialization seems to be a global issue as few students choose Accounting Specialization(Lim & Cheaseth, 2016). In Kenya, for instance, report from Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Services indicates that students are allowed to make changes to their career after receiving the forth form results (KUCCPS, 2019). The changes are made based on their performance and the relevant clusters points.

Otherwise no career guidance is given them at this time on the type of course they would like to undertake(Lugulu & Kipkoech, 2011).When students finally report to the Universities, most of those selected to pursue the Bachelors of Commerce program find The First Course in Accounting difficult (Musa, Amadi,Odoyo & Sagwa,2019).

1.1. Literature Review

Most of the prior studies were undertaken in developed and did not focus on the joinet effect of The First Course in Accounting, Students Performace and Career Guidance on the Choice of Accounting Specialization. The c counttries included; the United States of America - (Omar, 2009);(Marinaccio, 2017); Ireland - (Molloy, 2009); Australia -(Jackling & Calero, , 2006); Malaysia -(Zakaria, Wan Fauzi, & Hassan, 2012); China -(Lanson, 2010); New Zealand -(Malthus & Fowler, 2008) and Ethiopia(Dibabe, Wubie, & Wondmagegn, 2015). This created a necessity of the study in developing countries such as Kenya. The joint effects of the first Course in Accounting, Students Performance and Career Guidance was lacking.

A study by Geiger and Oligby (2000) on the first Course in Accounting concentrated on students' perceptions at start and end of the course, Findings revealed that students' perceptions towards the course remained static and were not altered by the accounting Instructors. Numerous studies on Accounting Major reported conflicting results without universal agreements in most countries across the world (Dibabe, 2015;Sang & Tang, 2016).

A study by Samson (2010) on the nature of The First Course in Accounting established that students who were taken through the whole process of Accounting Cycle understood the basics of accounting. This was contrary to their counterparts who did not perform as well. Other studies established a significant positive intervening relationship between Students performance and choice of Accounting Specialization(Zakaria, Wan Fauzi, & Hassan, 2012).

A study by (Mudilia, Ayiro, & Kipsoi, 2017), established that Kenyan students were not given adequate career guidance in accounting profession. This was evidenced by the fact that the students were allowed time after the release of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results to make changes on their career based on cluster points (KUCCPS, 2019). Research has also shown that most students during Introductory Accounting Course were not given proper career guidance in accounting profession. This was evidenced by the fact that those who chose Accounting Specialization remained unsettled throughout the grace period given them to make changes.

Further most studies concentrated mainly on earnings; career opportunities (Dibabe, Wubie, & Wondmagegn, 2015) and characteristics of a major only (Marinaccio, 2017). Findings of these studies indicated that most students were concerned with the results of their decisions such as good long term earnings, variety in the job, excitement and career advancement (Faisal, Mishari, Ayman, & Noura, 2016). The joint effect of The First Course in Accounting, Students Performance and Career Guidance was lacking.

1.2. Theoretical Review

The study used the Theory of Consumer Behavior which was developed by William Stanley Jevon (1870), a British Economist. It explained how consumers behave given alternatives. The Theory focused on a consumer whose aim wasto maximize utility. The Theory was important to the current study becausethe choice of Accounting Specialization is a utility that should be maximized. The consumers in this case were the students whose aims were to maximize satisfaction (utility) from the choice of Accounting Specialization given The First Course in Accounting, Students' Performance and Career Guidance. The Theory of Consumer Behavior is important to the current study since it explains the joint effect of the study variables given; The First Course in Accounting, students' performance and career guidance on choice of Accounting Specialization.
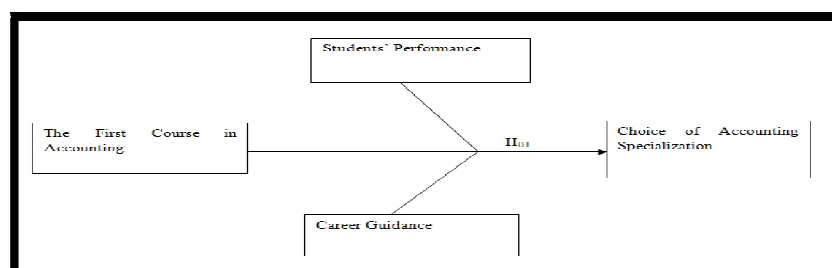

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.
Source: Author (2020)

H_{01}: Denotes a joint effect of The First Course in Accounting, Students' Performance and Career Guidance on Choice of Accounting Specialization.

The hypothesis had been formulated based on the joint interrelationships depicted on the conceptual framework.

1.3. Methodology

The study used a cross sectional research design as data was collected at once from students who had made their major choices from the twelve selected Kenyan Universities. In this model, a composite of all the three variables was formed and coded as $X*$. The choice of Accounting Specialization was then regressed on The First Course in Accounting using a binary logistic regression model as shown in the Model below:

$$Log_e\left(\frac{P(Y)}{1-P(Y)}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X* + \varepsilon \, .$$

Where

$P(Y) =$ Probability of a student choosing Accounting Specialization

$\dfrac{P(Y)}{1-P(Y)} =$ Odds ratio of a student choosing Accounting Specialization

$\beta_0 =$ Constant coefficient

$\beta_1 =$ Coefficient of The First Course in Accounting

$\beta_2 =$ Coefficient of student's performance (Career guidance)

$\beta_3 =$ Coefficient of Career guidance

$X_1 =$ The First Course in Accounting

$X_2 =$ Student's performance

$X_3 =$ Career guidance

$\varepsilon =$ Error term

Significance of the coefficient β_1 in the Model was used to test H_{01}.

2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The study discussed how the joint hypothesis was tested. The hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance and thus, the rejection rule was to reject the null hypothesis whenever p-value < 0.05. The joint effect relationship was done by testing the hypothesis. Data analysis and interpretation revealed that The First Course in Accounting, students' performance and career guidance have joint effect on the choice of Accounting Specialization in Kenyan Universities. In this model, the study regressed the log odds of majoring in accounting based on The First Course in Accounting, Students' performance and Career guidance. To test the joint effect, a composite variable, $X*$ of the three predictor variables (The First Course in Accounting, Students performance and Career guidance) was obtained as explained below. Consequently, the logistic regression model was of the form:

$$Log_e\left(\frac{P(Y)}{1-P(Y)}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X* + \varepsilon$$

Significance of the coefficient β_1 was used to test for the significance of the joint effect of the predictor variables. In this part, the tested hypothesis was formulated as follows: H01:The First Course in Accounting, career guidance and student's performance have no significant joint effect on the choice of Accounting Specialization in Kenyan Universities. Summary of the joint effect analysis was as shown in Table 1below

Regression model		Statistic			Value
Logistic regression		Number of obs		=	315
		LR Chi2 (1)		=	9.281
		Prob> chi2		=	0.001
Log Likelihood = -178.02107		Pseudo R2		=	0.0705
	Coeff.	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]
Composite Variable	-0.459	0.233	-1.97	0.035	-0.916 -0.023
_const.	-0.969	0.140	-6.921	0.000	-1.243 -0.695

Table 1: Joint Effects Model Summary

From Table 1, the study has the goodness of fit section and the coefficient section. In the goodness-of-fit part, the study had LR Chi2 = 9.281 with a p-value of 0.001.

The study used the Chi2 value and its p-value to check for the significance of the model fit. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the Chi2 value implies that the model is significant and adequately fits the data compared to an empty model.

The Pseudo R2 (= 0.705) implies that variations in the composite variable account for 7.05% of the total variations in the log likelihood of a student choosing Accounting Specialization. In the coefficient section, the study obtainedthe coefficient of the composite variable to be -0.459 with a p-value of 0.035.

Based on the coefficients in Table 1, the study obtained the following logistic regression equation.

$$Log_e\left(\frac{P(Y)}{1-P(Y)}\right) = -0.969 - 0.459X* \text{...(1)}$$

To test for the significance of the joint effect (composite variable), the use the corresponding p-value (= 0.035). Based on the obtained p-value, the coefficient, and thus the joint variable is significant at 0.05 level of significance. That is, The First Course in Accounting, Students' performance and Career guidance have a significant joint effect on the choice of Accounting Specialization by students. This means that any improvement in the joint effect (composite variable) by one unit would increase the log odds of students choosing accounting as a major by -0.459. From the coefficient of the composite variable, the odds ratio of choosing accounting corresponding to a unit increase in the joint variable is given by $e^{-0.459} = 0.632$.

Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the study inferred that there is a significant proportional change in the odds of a student choosing accounting by 0.632 due to a unit increase in the joint variable. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis H_{04}at 5% level of significance about the non-significance that there was no joint effect of The First Course in Accounting, students' performance and career guidance on the choice of Accounting Specialization in Kenyan universities.

The study rejected a null hypothesis that there was no significant joint effect of The First Course in Accounting, Students' Performance and Career Guidance on the Choice of Accounting Specialization in Kenyan universities. This decision implies that The First Course in Accounting, Students' Performance and Career Guidance have a significant joint effect on the decision by a student in Kenyan universities to choose accounting specialization. The study established that the three variables all worked together toward a common goal. For example, in order to attract more students to Accounting Specialization, it calls for a joint effort in all the aspects of accounting including the application of appropriate teaching methodology in relevant accounting areas, qualified accounting Instructors, and completion of all contents in The First Course in Accounting. This will result into most students developing interest in the course and consequently good performance whose end result will be witnessed in students being guided rightly towards choosing Accounting Specialization.

The joint effect of The First Course in Accounting, Students' performance and Career guidance on the choice of Accounting Specialization is lacking from prior studies. This could be the greatest contribution of the current study to knowledge.

3. Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Test Type	Hypothesis	Absolute Computed Z Statistics	Tabulated Z Value	P-value	Comment
Joint effect	H_{01} H	1.970	-	0.035	Reject H_{04} Accept H_4

Table 2: Summary of Hypotheses Testing

- H_1: The First Course inAccounting, students' performance, career guidance has a significant joint effect on the choice of Accounting Specialization (Accepted).
- H_{01}: The First Course in Accounting, students' performance, career guidance has no significant joint effect on the choice of Accounting Specialization.

4. Conclusion

From the results of the study, it is clear that the sum of The First Course in Accounting, Students Performance and Career Guidanceis greater than that of theindividual variables on the Choice of Accounting Specialization. Prior studies ignored the synergetic benefits accruing from the joint application of the three variables. The findings of the current studywill be applicable to Universities offering Accounting Specialization world-wide. This result will be expected to address the survival of accounting profession which is at the verge of collapse.

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